



DPCC Myth vs. Fact: Common Core and the Every Child Achieves Act

Myth: The federal government mandated the Common Core.

Fact: The Common Core was not mandated by the federal government.

- In response to growing concerns that Americans need to improve education to remain competitive in a global economy, the Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI) was a state-led effort to develop common academic-content standards for math and English/language arts. The effort was coordinated by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers and was formally launched in spring 2009. Numerous states, business leaders, teachers, and stakeholders participated in the process to develop the standards. [CRS, [9/2/14](#)]
- As a result of the hard work of the states, teachers, and other experts, the vast majority of states have adopted the Common Core. However, not all states have adopted the standards. The federal government had no role in developing the standards, although the Administration expressed support for the standards. [Senate HELP Committee, 7/15; CRS, [9/2/14](#)]
- Under No Child Left Behind (NCLB), states were required to adopt a single statewide test that was aligned to challenging academic standards. The standards specified what students were expected to know and be able to do at every grade level. Under the Administration's waivers from NCLB, many states chose to adopt the state-developed Common Core standards, but states were not forced to adopt the Common Core, and several states that received a waiver from the Department of Education did not adopt the Common Core. [Senate HELP Committee, 4/15]
- Under the Every Child Achieves Act (ECAA), states will be free to determine whether to adopt the Common Core, without any interference from the federal government. The ECAA strengthens the federal commitment to state control over standards and assessments, while maintaining important federal guardrails to ensure the standards states develop are high quality. Specifically, the ECAA would: [Senate HELP Committee, 7/15]
 - Maintain the requirement that states adopt challenging state academic standards in reading, math, and science.
 - Require states to align standards with entrance standards at public institutions of higher education, relevant career and technical standards, and relevant early learning guidelines.
 - Affirm that the federal government, including the Secretary of Education, may not mandate or incentivize states to adopt or maintain any particular set of standards, including the Common Core.

Myth: The Common Core is a national curriculum.

Fact: The Common Core is a set of standards, not a curriculum, and it does not tell states, school districts, or teachers what or how to teach.

- The Common Core is a set of standards that set higher expectations for students to graduate from high school ready for postsecondary education or the workforce. The standards establish what students should learn at each grade level, but they do not dictate how teachers should teach. Instead, schools and teachers decide how best to help students reach the standards. [Senate HELP Committee, 7/15]
- Unlike standards, including the Common Core, curriculum describes in much more detail how students and teachers should interact with specific content, in what order, and over the course of the school year in order to achieve a set of goals. While standards remain constant, curriculum can be altered by states, school districts, local schools, and teachers to ensure that students are meeting the learning goals. [Education Trust, [7/8/14](#); NPR, [5/27/14](#)]
- The decisions regarding how standards are taught to students and how students are prepared for assessments remain a state and local decision in states that adopt and implement the Common Core. [Senate HELP Committee, 7/15; CRS, [9/2/14](#)]
- Regardless of how many states adopt the Common Core, it will not result in a single set of national standards in reading and mathematics, or a single set of tests, because states that adopt the Common Core are allowed to add additional standards of their own choosing to the Common Core. Therefore, each state adopting and implementing the Common Core could continue to have a unique set of state standards that share common elements with other adopting states. [CRS, [9/2/14](#)]
- There are already several prohibitions in federal law to limit the role of the federal government with respect to the approval of state standards and assessments, control of curriculum, control over educational materials, and the creation of a national test. ESEA also explicitly prohibits the federal government from mandating or controlling a state, school district, or school's curriculum and the ECAA will maintain this prohibition. [Senate HELP Committee, 7/15; CRS, [9/2/14](#)]

Myth: The Common Core has led to the creation of national tests.

Fact: States voluntarily formed two consortia to develop new assessments aligned to common, college- and career-ready standards.

- The consortia were named the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (Smarter Balanced) and the Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). States are not required to use Smarter Balanced or PARCC assessments by federal law or the Administration's NCLB waivers. In fact, several states have indicated that they are planning to use something other than the assessments being developed by PARCC and Smarter Balanced. [Senate HELP Committee, 7/15; CRS, [9/2/14](#)]
- In addition, even among the states that are planning to use tests developed by Smarter Balanced or PARCC, some states are planning on using a consortium developed test for only part, but not all, of the grade levels tested. [CRS, [9/2/14](#)]
- The ECAA will strengthen existing federal law that prohibits the federal government from requiring states to adopt a specific test. [Senate HELP Committee, 7/15]